

Icon of Saints Behnam and his sister Sarah, martyrs, painted in 1782 A.D.

The Martyrdom of St. Behnam and St. Sarah

Celebrated on the 14th day of Kiahk

The church celebrates the martyrdom of St. Behnam and St. Sarah on the 14th day of Kiahk (December 23). St. Behnam and his sister St. Sarah were the children of the king of Persia. St. Sarah was sick with a terrible disease called leprosy. Leprosy changes the color of your skin and is very contagious. There was no known cure for leprosy. Those who have leprosy were outcasts who lived in by themselves or only with other people who have leprosy. It was a very shameful disease to have.

One day prince Behnam went hunting in the wilderness with some of his slaves. He saw a large animal and went hunting after it, separating himself from the group. Night came and he slept by himself in the wilderness. He had a dream that someone was telling him to look for a man named Matthew, who lived in that mountainous area. St. Matthew would pray for his sister and she would be cured.

The next morning the prince found his party and they searched for St. Matthew. They found the saint in a cave in the mountain. The prince knelt before St. Matthew and told him about his sister and the vision he had. He asked St. Matthew to come with him to the city and see his sister Sarah.

When they reached the palace, the prince went to his mother and told her about his vision and that St. Matthew had come with them to pray and cure the princess of her disease. The queen allowed Sarah to see the saint. St. Matthew prayed over the princess and she was cured. Then the saint be-

gan to tell them (the prince and princess) about our Lord Jesus Christ; how He died for all of us and how He gave us salvation and the power over sickness and death. Then they asked to be baptized. The saint baptized them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Afterward, the saint went back to his cave.

The king was surprised and delighted when his daughter went to meet him and she was cured from her disease. He asked her how it happened. St. Sarah told her father that our Lord Jesus Christ through the hands of St. Matthew cured her and that she and the prince were Christians. The king became angry that they were baptized and threatened them with severe punishment if they did not renounce their Christian faith at once. Saints Behnam and Sarah refused to renounce their faith and tried to escape with some of their friends but the king's soldiers found them and killed them. They both received the crown of martyrdom.

Later an evil spirit possessed the king. It tormented him with pain and fear. The worried queen sent for St. Matthew, knowing in her heart that the saint had indeed brought about the cure for her daughter. When St. Matthew arrived, he prayed for the king and the Lord immediately healed him. The king was very glad to be free of the terrible evil spirit and he and the queen listened to St. Matthew's words about the all powerful and true God. Both the king and queen believed in our Lord Jesus Christ and were baptized. Eventually the entire city believed in our Lord Jesus.

The king ordered a monastery built for St. Matthew and had the bodies of his children, Sts. Behnam and Sarah be buried in it. Many healings and miracles were performed from the holy bodies of the prince and princess who never inherited an earthly kingdom but received the eternal kingdom of Heaven.

May their prayers be with us all. Amen.